

Nebraska Small Business Person of the Year 2009

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James (Jim) Hellbusch, President, and Connie Hellbusch, Treasurer, of Duo Lift Manufacturing Company, Inc. located in Columbus, Nebraska has been named the Nebraska Small Business of the Year for 2009.

Duo Lift Manufacturing Company, Inc. is a family owned manufacturer of agricultural equipment primarily for the fertilizer industry as well as commercial and industrial trailers.

The company was founded in 1943 by Jim's father, Art Hellbusch, a Columbus area farmer who suffered a back injury during corn harvest season. After injuring his back scooping corn, Art traded in his scoop shovel after developing a wagon lift fashioned out of pulleys and cables. The lift boosted the wagon's box and grain poured out the back. It wasn't until 1946, after hydraulic power was put to use that the small business arrived at its name. After the wagon lifts had been converted with two hydraulic lifts, Art's wife, Vernetta, suggested the name Duo Lift because of the wagon's two cylinders.

Jim Hellbusch joined the family business in 1969 after graduating from the University of Nebraska at Lincoln with a degree in industrial arts and engineering. Jim continued to build up this business while operating the family farm, and it wasn't until the 1980's that the company designed and manufactured its first trailers for the fertilizer industry.

The fertilizer trailers and running gears are the signature products of Duo Lift, but they also have a patent on Dura-Drill soil sampler which can sample soil in frozen and unfrozen soil. Other products include de-icing equipment, specialized commercial trailers for heavy equipment and customized van trailers, to name a few.

Duo Lift is known throughout the industry as a manufacturer of high quality equipment with special emphasis on safety. The company has distributors throughout the United States and Canada and currently employs 75 people operating in three shifts.

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